

AN

1076

E L E G Y

WRITTEN ON

Saint M A R K's Eve.

—— Διὸς δέ τοι ἄγγελός εἰμι,
Ὅς σευ, ἄνευθεν ἑὼν, μέγα κήδεσσι, ἧδ' ἐλεαίρει·
—— Ἀλλὰ σὺ σῆσιν ἔχε φρεσὶ, μηδέ σε λήθη
Αἰρέτω, εὖτ' ἂν σε μελίφρων ὕφνος ἀνήη.

Hom. Iliad. 2.



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FRAUGHT with malicious storm a louring cloud
Disrobes the firmament, that glow'd with light,
While from yon rain-beat porch the raven loud
Ushers with hideous shriek the startled night.

The spider ticking from the fretted wall,
And humming beetle sing their drowsy knell,
The fightless bats a shrill assembly call,
And dire events in dismal sounds foretell.

To

To this lone waste, this dark and dreary vale,
 Where mould'ring sleeps the once-inspired clay,
 (If so I read aright the gossip tale,)
 Each destin'd shade directs its gloomy way.

How some the churlish and rough whirlwind ride
 Mingling I've learnt amid the village throng,
 Others, like sailing meteors, nimbly glide,
 Or stalk slow-pac'd the thick-strew'd tombs among.

Each, as her mind presents the varied shape,
 With greedy horror tells her heedful friend,
 She, o'er the blue and glim'ring lamp agape,
 Feels every magic hair to start an end.

'Warn'd by that dying flame at length to part
 Each trembling guest slips to her several bed;
 Whilst I, fond swain, bewail a slighted heart,
 And breathe my sorrows to the senseless dead.

But thou, that haunt'st the cloister-circled tower,
 Echo, I ween, dost hear my wailing moan,
 For sure as comes this sad and secret hour,
 Thy ill-tim'd sympathy returns each groan.

Thou

Thou too, pale cypress, whose forewarning leaf
Strews the dull mansions of th' intombed dead,
Say, is it then in friendship to my grief
Thou point'st where soon shall rest this witless head?

Yet for thou'rt wont my humble brow to crown,
And eke my pipe thy wreathed bows sustain,
If chance my fate should reach some shepherd clown
Tell, for you know, the story of my pain.

Nor may thy bark its many a wound abide,
The name which marreth us shall ruin thee,
Nor shall the wise this simple talk deride,
Can I find ought more stony-deaf than she?

Tho' the proud trunk heaven's full despight doth brave,
Nathless it yieldeth to the subtle wind,
Tho' the rock frown, the patient prostrate wave
By long assault doth sure admittance find:

Yet she unmov'd my mournful sigh can hear,
And sterner than the knotted oak remain,
Yet she remorseless sees my falling tear,
And less than lifeless flint regards my pain.

But

But strait the sluggish hemlock springing round
 Wafts to my slumb'ring sense the loaded gale,
 While night, who now had hush each ruder sound,
 Soft o'er my temples spreads her sable veil.

The balmy influence of long-lacked sleep
 To sweet oblivion lulls my soothed breast,
 The winds that erst did lash that vexed deep,
 The storm of raging troubles sinks to rest.

O Sleep! how near to death art thou allied!
 O Death! what art thou but a longer dream?
 Nor wot I of the ill that can betide,
 When thou so still and so serene dost seem.

Strange sights oppress my fancy's wakeful eye,
 A gasty troop of meager ghosts appear,
 There one in pensive plight I do espy
 To close with uncouth gait the creeping rear.

Oh then! thou spirit forlorn, instruct me soon
 Why shrinks my soul at thy partic'lar sight,
 Say why thou visit'st thus the paly moon
 Doubling the native horrors of the night.

Still

Still in the most dejected front I see
Some struggling spark, some faint upholding ray,
Alas! why comes not the same hope to thee?
Thy mein is sadness, and thy look dismay.

At this he waves his head, and strikes his breast,
And thrice in piteous sort he doth assay,
The eloquence of woe bespeaks the rest,
And stops the fault'ring accent on its way.

At length—"I warn thee, mark you cheerless train,
" Know, ere this eve returns, to each is given,
" Or to endure the fierce assault of pain,
" Or freely tread the star-pav'd courts of heaven.

" See many a faded cheek and furrow'd brow,
" That witness dire dismay, and lost estate,
" What soul so confident but fears to know
" That righteous sentence which must seal its fate?

" The mimic tyrant whose contemptuous mind
" Ne'er smil'd in pity on the wretch beneath,
" At the last hour in serious truth shall find
" No flattery in the chill embrace of death.

" Awhile

“ Awhile he stood in lawless pow’r unharm’d ;
“ What pow’r shall screen him at that vengeful time,
“ When every eye shall wake, each hand be arm’d
“ To shame his folly, and correct his crime ?

“ What tho’ the pageantry of labor’d woe
“ Should bid the marble rise to solemn pride ;
“ Such the false grandeur of its bootless shew,
“ It gilds the glittering slave it meant to hide.

“ The ruddy swain who leaves his quiet sleep,
“ Chiding with early song the ling’ring dawn,
“ Whose sober care directs the trooping sheep
“ Or to the willowy brook, or pastur’d lawn,

“ To whom, as mindful of his lowly birth,
“ Nature an universal blank hath given,
“ Soon when he quits this dull unfriendly earth,
“ Shall rest approved by the voice of heaven.

“ For his poor steps would ne’er presume to tread
“ Those much-worn paths where nobler feet had been,
“ Dar’d not to follow where they boldly led,
“ But left to greater souls the privilege to sin.

“ The

“ The charms of wit, the joys of youth shall fade,
 “ And beauty's early bloom shall wither'd be,
 “ A killing blast shall strike th' unwary maid,
 “ That heart will bleed, tho' now it tortures thee.

“ The noise of sports, the luxury of dress,
 “ All giddy gay desires shall wear away,
 “ Each splendid vanity forget to bless,
 “ And she all wan with wasting grief decay.

“ For neither titled fame, nor hoarded wealth,
 “ Nor beauty's early bloom hath power to save,
 “ Nor sober industry, nor ruddy health
 “ Can hold one victim from th' untimely grave.

“ But idly sure the needful time we spend,
 “ While as more weighty words I should impart,
 “ O let thy reason's dearest thought attend,
 “ And read th' awak'ning lesson to thine heart.

“ Far be thy custom'd place where yonder steep
 “ High over-arch'd surveys the distant stream,
 “ Think what a giddy height it is to leap,
 “ Think, and beware, nor slight your warning dream.

" To cleave the yielding unsubstantial air,---
" To light transfixt upon the pointed rock,---
" O think!--Yet, if thy steady sense can dare
" To meet with welcome hail this mortal shock,

" Too soon thou wilt regret thine evil plight,
" That spirit howe'er resolv'd must needs be griev'd,
" When hell's dread regions open to the sight,
" Regions, which eye ne'er saw, nor heart conceiv'd.

" And well I ween the wretch, whoe'er he be,
" That swims that gulph shall never pass it more,
" It is a merciless and thwarting sea,
" That ne'er will waft him to the once-left shore.

" Then rue the hapless while, thou foolish swain,
" When thou wast trapped by those witching eyes,
" It is the galled conscience gives the pain,
" That fell insatiate worm, that never dies.

" To the gross mould, from whence it did begin,
" After short time the kindred clay returns,
" While the more active light which shines within,
" The unexhausted lamp for ever burns.

" That

“ That quick'ning portion of the Spirit divine
 “ Shall surely last thro' endless time to come,
 “ Nor seek her airy motions to confine
 “ Within the shallow limits of the tomb.

“ Perchance some fury, like this scornful fair,
 “ May haunt thy walks, and every step attend,
 “ Cloath'd in each frown the same she may appear,
 “ Save this a mortal, that a deathless fiend.

“ Yet, worthless as I am, I do not mean
 “ With curious and affrontive zeal to pry,
 “ Where heaven hath drawn its curtain o'er the scene,
 “ And shut the clouded prospect from mine eye.

“ This only and important truth I learn,
 “ When the last trump shall wake the lazy dead,
 “ No vain pretence, no trifling fond concern
 “ Shall rouse the shrouded sinner from his bed.

“ Hence then, and mingle in the mirthful train,
 “ With them resume thy long-neglected crook,
 “ Awake to sprightly stop the pipe again,
 “ Cheer thy sad heart, and smooth thy love-worn look.

“ If

" If so thine hallow'd soul thou e'er didst love,
 " As heaven in gentle mercy leans to thee,
 " If there be damn'd below, or saints above,
 " If thou art mock'd of her, or mourn'd of me,

" If ought can move thee—fly the wily snare
 " That may seduce thee to this fearful end,"
 (When strait dissolving in the viewless air)
 " Awake!" he cries, " bestir thee, and amend!"

F I N I S.

